

Tyrannical Libertymen.

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A

DISCOURSE UPON NEGRO-SLAVERY

IN THE

UNITED STATES:

COMPOSED AT _____, IN NEWHAMPSHIRE;

ON THE

LATE FEDERAL THANKSGIVING-DAY.



"AND I BEHELD THE TEARS OF SUCH AS WERE OPPRESSED, AND THEY HAD NO COMFORTER; AND ON THE SIDE OF THEIR OPPRESSORS THERE WAS POWER; BUT THEY HAD NO COMFORTER."

FROM THE EAGLE OFFICE.

HANOVER, NEWHAMPSHIRE, 1795.

Tyrannical Libertymen

DISCOURSE BY GEORGE SLAVER

COMPOSED BY NEW HAMPSHIRE



LATE FEDERAL TRANSFERRING-DAY

AND I BEHELD THE TYPE OF SUCH AS WERE CAPTIVE
AND THEY HAD NO COMFORT; AND ON THE
ON THEIR DEPARTURE THERE WAS TOWER; BUT THEY
HAD NO COMFORT.

FROM THE EAGLE OFFICE
NEW YORK NEW HAMPSHIRE 1855

A

DISCOURSE, &c.

2 SAMUEL xii. 5.

*And David's anger was greatly kindled against the man ;
and he said to Nathan, As the LORD liveth, the man that
hath done this thing shall surely die.*

UNWARY and vindictive monarch ! He clearly
sees, in its full magnitude, the mote that blemishes
another's eye, while, at the same time, without his
seeming to be sensible of it, a beam is in his own eye.

And we are his legitimate children. The blood of
this royal dispenser of justice flows in our veins. *We*
sentence the Algerines, as *he* that villainous sheep-steal-
er. We want only the power, and they would expe-
rience a most exemplary chastisement ; and, if some
could be gratified, would be erased from the catalogue
of nations.

Prepare your ears to hear a most extraordinary anath-
ema, pronounced against that infatuated people by one
of our first poets and eminent statesmen.

*“ Great maledictions of eternal wrath,
Which like heaven's vial'd vengeance singe and scathe !
Transfix with scorpion stings their callous heart,
Make blood-shot eye-balls from their sockets start,
For balm pour brimstone in their wounded soul,
Then ope perdition and ingulph the whole ! ”*

In the name of horror, why this raving and execra-
tion ! O, the Algerines have captured and enslaved
five or six score of Americans, and keep them in ab-
ject servitude and distress. For this they are condem-
ned to death and perdition ; and I know not but heaven
suggested the verdict.

But if this thing must be done in the green tree,
what shall be done in the dry ? In these United States,
not five or six score, but five or six hundred thousand
persons,

persons, are enslaved;—not captured, like those Americans, upon the high seas, where no one goes unapprized of the danger; but dragged defenceless from their native fields; and frequently treated, as might easily be made to appear, in a manner barbarous as our people are treated at Algiers.

In Massachusetts the negroes were freed long ago. In New-Hampshire and Vermont, they are few in number; but *some* were found, at the taking of the last census, to be still in slavery even here. They might indeed be free, did they know how to avail themselves of the bill of rights, which declares, that all men are born equally free. But to our disgrace, they are and ought to be considered as slaves, till government shall take effectual measures, as their guardians, to see, that they are in fact free; and till, for the sake of example, their freedom shall be made known to the world.

What if some states have passed acts of non-importation? That, so far as respects the negroes now in slavery, is just nothing at all. How will the non-importation of others repair the wrong done to these? Or, if no wrong is done, why should importation be stopped? Those who are now slaves may pray, it is true, like the rich man in hell, that none of their brethren may be brought to this place of torment; but their prayers would avail but little, if granted, in mitigation of their own tortures.

The injustice of enslaving our fellow-creatures, even though they are black, is pretty generally acknowledged; and in respect to *our* slaves, people affect to lament their misfortune in being brought into a situation, which renders it *necessary*, that they should be continued in bondage. It is just, no doubt, that the negroes should have remained free; but they are slaves, and therefore let them continue so. Let them, however, have this consolation, that we will leave off our injustice gradually. There shall be an abolition; but it shall begin moderately, and proceed leisurely, and be completed sometime or never. Thus the poor slave may comfort himself, that at some distant period, *when* GOD only knows, he, or his children, or his children's children, may hope for deliverance.

Some

Some are for setting them free immediately. They are not for continuing an abuse of the most cruel nature, under any pretext whatever. And why are not all of this opinion? It is because many are prejudiced, and many are indolent, and very many are interested; not to mention, that most people pay but very little attention to the subject.

Hence it has happened, that every advocate for an immediate emancipation has been immediately silenced by some specious objection. The indolent have by this means found repose for their consciences; and the interested have rid themselves of much odium, without any great danger of losing their vassals.

First, it is plead, that slaves are *property*. "The operation (said Mr. Madison in Congress) of *reducing the number of slaves* was going on as quickly as possible. The mention of such a thing in the house had in the mean time a *very bad effect on that species of property*."

Secondly, without negro slaves the southern plantations can not be managed to advantage.

Thirdly, the most plausible and confounding plea of the whole is, that if they were all at once and immediately set at liberty, to run at large, they would be a dangerous parcel of vagabonds, more unhappy themselves than at present, and the terrour and vexation of the community.

O, it is doubtless cruel, to deprive a master of the slave for whom he paid perhaps forty guineas, and has had his labour for not more than forty years. But to whom did he pay the guineas? In the name of conscience, who had any right, in the first place, to sell negroes? If a shipload of Frenchmen were offered for sale, the enquiry would quickly be made. The principle would soon be established, that man could not be made the property of man.

But we ourselves are too secure to *imagine* the case our own; otherwise we might appeal to that eternal rule of right, to do by others as they should do by us. And with what feeling should we stand forth for sale, be slaves, be called *that species of property*; we, who denied our parent country the right of taxing us, and ed-
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ed our swords to maintain our liberty, or to die ! Should we endure the oppressor's rod ?

Money has been paid by the purchaser ; but no equivalent has been given or can be given to the negro. Liberty can not be estimated by guineas. If so, have I no claim to my liberty, because a tyrant, stronger than I, has robbed me of it, and sold me ? This species of property, upon that principle, is not so highly privileged as other species ; for the laws take care, that stolen goods, though purchased by an honest man at their full value, shall be given up to the right owner ; and shall they tolerate slavery ?

But if there seems injustice, that individuals should wholly lose the labour of those for whom they have paid so much money ; let the state under the countenance of which they have carried on this accursed traffic, make them some consideration, and let every one who has acquiesced in the system of slavery contribute to its abolition.

Yet every master is holden by every tie, whatever government may see cause to do or not to do, to grant manumission to his slaves ; and woe to the man who takes advantage of any human institution, to injure his fellow creatures, when his conscience testifies that it is an injury, and that the law is cruel, and repugnant to all right.

A regular importation of negro slaves into America took place in consequence of a suggestion of Casas, a Spanish clergyman. When the Spaniards conquered Hispaniola, they reduced the Indians to servitude, and treated them with such cruelty, that multitudes perished. Casas strove to relieve them ; but failed in every measure. At last he proposed the importing of negroes ; in order, by enslaving them, to free the Indians. So blind is man !

The second objection in my enumeration is no more an argument in favour of continuing what negroes in slavery we already possess, than of importing new ones. But experiments have proved, in different parts of the world, that freemen will do more labour than slaves. Besides the objection is too iniquitous to be harboured a moment ; and I have been pained at hearing it urged
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by some, who seem in other instances to be philanthropic.

The third objection pretends kindness to the negroes, and a regard to our own security.

It is quite fashionable to observe, under colour of the former principle, that freed negroes generally go more meanly dressed than slaves. What then ! Is freedom to be sold for a fine coat, for calicoes ? And what if some slaves fare better than we ? Who would be even a fycophant, much less a slave, for the sake of better fare ?

But the observation, made as a general one, is false. The bulk of slaves in the southern states can not be more naked, and ill-used, and defenceless, than they are now. Soul and body would separate. And even if freedom should be the occasion of their being still more destitute, and it were possible that they should yet continue to live ; would they not likewise, on the other hand, get clear of incessant drudgery, of dispiriting menaces, of merciless flagellations ? What they would lose in dress and diet they would save in sweat and blood.

And do those who live worse with freedom than when slaves, if there are such, do they commonly return to their *cidevant* masters, and say, I had rather be your slave than be free ? Such a thing may sometimes happen ; but if it were a general practice, where would be the hazard of setting them in general free ? It would only be losing their labour, while they could make a little experiment, and then return to their abject condition, more obsequious than before.

The truth is, liberty is sweet, and slavery is horrible ; and nothing can be an equivalent for the one, and nothing but insensibility or a hope of deliverance can render the other supportable.

The principle we are now examining talks of kindness. It would keep the negroes in slavery for their own good, A very suspicious sort of humanity ! Why not re-enslave those who have been once freed ? Why not import more ? Or do they live better in Congo, than those happy wretches who have had the good fortune to become slaves ? Why not subjugate the Indians to this enviable condition ; or raise the few indigent
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of our own nation to the rank of bondmen? Why does this benevolent system embrace only negroes now in slavery? Perhaps we are under peculiar obligations, to regard their good. Yes, GOD knows it, and I wish we may be wise enough to discharge these obligations in due season.

But this pretension of kindness is only a cloak. The other part of the objection is all that creates any difficulty. *That* I confess is of great importance, and merits a wise and candid discussion.

We are in this dilemma: there is such a number of slaves in the country:—and, on the one hand, we can not continue them in bondage without doing violence to our consciences, and incurring the displeasure of heaven; nor, on the other, can we free them without extraordinary measures. It will require money, and labour, and wisdom, and vigilance. Of two evils, if the latter can be degraded to such a name, we have to determine which is the least.

There is no reason to expect, but that, if so many myriads of wretches were turned out of doors, destitute, to live as they list, uncultivated as they now are, they would be a nuisance in society. Probably, besides idleness and beggary, we should see uncomfortable disorders, perhaps outrages, perhaps fatal crimes; some through ignorance, some through wantonness, some from impelling hunger, and some from revenge. They are not fit to be their own guides; they have been habituated, not to reason, but obey; their wills have been crushed; they are scarce conscious of the power of willing; and, what is worse, they are not taught the duties that arise from social relations, nor disciplined to good morals.

What then can be done? This is the momentous question. But whenever we are as sincerely desirous of freeing the negroes as we are of aggrandizing our own nation, we shall soon devise ways and means sufficient for the purpose. We, who descant upon the rights of man, who boast our improvements, our resources, our enterprize, our energy, our patriots, our territory, and, in fine, our “asylum for the unfortunate of other countries”;—we, the most flourishing nation on the globe,
if

If our hearts were engaged, should ask for no foreign assistance, to liberate our slaves.

But the question still recurs, What can be done? The answer is, If they are not fit for freedom, they must be fitted. They must be considered, for a time, as in a state of minority. It must be a state of dependence and discipline, not servitude. They must therefore be taken away from their masters, and, by direction of the magistrate, put under temporary guardians, governours, and instructors; to be educated, to be made acquainted with their rights and duties, and some honest method of acquiring a livelihood; to be prepared for citizenship.

I do not say, that all should be treated alike. I do not know, but *some* should be returned to Africa. Many are worn out with age and sore travail. They must not be cast helpless into the highways; but let them hear the glad news of liberty to the captive, that tears of transport may run down the furrows which have been deep-worn by tears of affliction. Does his master ask, how he shall live— who will support him? Live, wretch! how long have you revelled upon the fruit of his labours, ungratefully; and do you ask, how he shall live, how he shall be supported through the painful residue of a devoted life? Give him food from you own table, and beg him to pray for your avaricious soul.

After all, some may choose, though under no inability or bias, to remain with their masters. But, in this case, government ought to consider, whether it is not their duty, to interfere so far, as to see, that, if any remain, they do not remain *slaves*; and that, like other free persons, they can go whenever they please, according to the established principles of reciprocal contract. In short, they ought to have guardians.

Massachusetts gave a noble example; but, had they fallen upon the plan of carrying their negroes through such a preparation state before manumission, they would, I firmly believe, have found it a salutary measure, and have been celebrated for teaching the world a new lesson of humanity.

But suppose the negroes prepared for freedom, are
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they

they then to settle among us? Projectors are generally hissed at; but, as the object desired will probably never be accomplished, before many schemes have been rejected, why should we fear hissing? One proposal may be made of a plan, which appears to me to be feasible, and to promise advantages. Let a portion of our new territory be assigned for the purpose; and let the great body of the negroes be sent to colonize it. Perhaps they may be taken right from their masters and go through their non-age or preparation state in the wilderness. At any rate, they must not go empty-handed. They must have waggons and cattle, provisions and raiment, artificers and overseers. Religion must be taught, laws instituted, and order maintained among them. They must be inured to industry and economy; defended, if any should invade them; and awed by soldiery, if they should rebel.

Though doubtless difficulties would attend the achievement, yet with resolution it may be accomplished. And what a flattering prospect would it open to the well-wisher of mankind. We might reasonably expect soon to see a large province of black freemen, industrious and well regulated, improving in arts and learning, happy at home and at peace with us, affording some revenue and adding some strength to the nation, an asylum for other unfortunate Africans, a nursery from which might in time proceed able missionaries and teachers to the land of negroes. Might not the establishment of such a colony be of excessive influence in bringing about the universal spread of light, liberty, and benevolence. Ye republican Pharaohs, how long will ye harden your hearts, and not let the people go!

If the negroes should remain among us, though fully enfranchised, they will not be treated upon terms of equality; and perhaps never rise to that rank which they deserve. Let them go, therefore, be formed into a state, and, in due time, have a voice in Congress. They will never be men, till they are treated like men; they will never be citizens, till they feel themselves so; they will never be good citizens, till they know their duties and can appreciate their immunities.

Let who will startle or laugh, I steadfastly maintain, that we must bring them to an equal standing in point of privileges with whites. They must enjoy all the rights belonging to human nature.

Some allege, that negroes would have no gratitude. I do not believe it. It does not accord with human nature. I have known instances to the contrary. And yet, simply for freedom, they would owe no gratitude. Liberty is their right; and the treatment I have proposed is no more than a recompense for the injuries we have done them. All then is a matter of justice; and is gratitude due for an act of justice?

We are acting a very inconsistent part—worse than the man who distressed his fellow servant for a hundred pence, when himself owed ten thousand talents. We bluster about tyranny, and keep our arms ever burnished to defend our rights; while we have legions of tyrants among us, and make no opposition to their inflicting the scourge of bitterness.

Nor can it be made to appear, that the people of this state have no concern in the matter; unless it appears, that we have not a slave in the state, and that we have no concern in the Algerine slavery, to which we are voluntarily about to attend*;—and appears, that we have no concern in the internal affairs of the other states, arising from our federal relation, so that should the negroes in one of them make an insurrection, assume their liberty, and subjugate an equal number of whites to be *their* slaves, we, equally laden with black citizens or white, should regard the revolution with cold neutrality;—and appears further, that our joining in the celebration of this national thanksgiving is altogether a farce.

For

* There was a contribution upon this day, for the purpose of redeeming those Americans who are in slavery at Algiers:—an object worthy of a generous people. Their redemption, we hope, is not far distant. But, should any body contribute money for this purpose which he had cuagellid out of a negro slave, he would deserve less applause, than an actor in the comedy of *Cafar*.

For, in this festival, we are to pay our acknowledgements to HEAVEN, in concert with all the states, "for the manifold and signal mercies, which distinguish our lot as a nation, particularly for the possession of constitutions of government, which unite, and by their union establish liberty with order." So much in the words of the proclamation by our chief magistrate.

Our churches are probably bringing with rights and privileges—emigration of our forefathers from persecution—destruction of the Indians—protection against British violence—government of our own choosing—free justice—learning and respectability—peace in our borders and plenty in our habitations—not any to molest us or make us afraid.

But shame to the whole union, that more than a seventh part of the human beings in these states can, with no manner of propriety, join in any of these topics. They are not of the nation; and, therefore, have no national blessings to acknowledge. They have no share in the commonwealth. They are politically nothing. And by celebrating this day, we subscribe to their nonexistence.

Can the negroes praise GOD with the spirit and the understanding, that, in violation of all rights, they were forced from beyond the Atlantic, to be our slaves—that the Indians were extirpated, to make room for *their* masters—that they did not join the British in their war against us, and, by that means, recover their freedom; but neglect the opportunity, and so continue a servile, abused, and pitiable herd, without privilege, under government which they have every reason to hate, with no suffrage, depressed in ignorance and meanness, having no borders for peace nor habitation for plenty; but exposed always to somebody to molest them, and more than to make them *afraid*—to whip, wound, and maim them—to tire and starve them—and, in some places, to mangle and even to kill them.*

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* It is a fact, which can not be controverted, that negro slaves are not unrequently so abused, as to die in consequence; and instances are not wanting of their being killed outright.

These are the blessings which they, as a people, have to thank GOD for ; and if they are too stupid to experience proper sentiments upon the occasion, they are the more to be commiserated.

The slave-trade is a source of indescribable evils. It is the scourge of Africa and the bane of America. The negro nations are ruined by it. The weaker are continually a prey to the stronger. Crimes are committed, to which, if the slave-trade was abolished, there would be no temptation ; and cruelties are practised, which would be impossible. Their governments are arbitrary ; and, while a *subject* can be bartered for commodities, the despot is not likely to be very scrupulous about *rights*. His business is to satisfy his own appetites. The smallest offence, therefore, they punish by selling to slavery ; and pronounce a subject *guilty* upon the slightest evidence. Indeed, a forged accusation is often sufficient, supported by no evidence.

Besides, the most peaceful villages are infested with unprincipled wretches, who catch whom they can ;—not solely to oblige their christian customers, but to obtain “as much vile trash as I could grasp thus.” Wars too are waged between despots for the purpose only, though perhaps not avowedly so, of obtaining prisoners for the market. These are the means by which slaves are procured for American planters. This is the depredation to which we are accessory. For where is the difference of criminality, except in degree, whether we only lay on a constitution which sanctions this villainy ; or forbear to remonstrate with a neighbour, who holds in slavery the descendant of a negro, bought, by the neighbour’s grandfather, of a English Ishmaelite, who bought him of his barbarous brethren ; or whether we forced him ourselves from his father’s cottage and rivetted his chains with our own hands ?

O, ill-fated Africans ! What security have the most innocent, the most virtuous among them ! Where are all the “tender charities of life !” But we are invited to believe, that these people are blocks and dross, mere brutes, destitute of feeling. This is the slave-dealer’s policy.

policy. As if the breasts of bereft mothers and bereft lovers were exercised with no frantic pangs, when their children and consorts are torn from their arms, to be carried to a region, where, their countrymen suppose, because they never return*, that they are eaten;—a fate far preferable to that, which most of them experience, who, more particularly in the southern states and the Westindies, drag out a miserable life under

* The second African who ever returned from American slavery, as we are told by Francis Moore, was one Job Ben Solomon, a Pholey, son of the high-priest of Bundo in the interior parts of Africa. Travelling across the country with his herds of cattle in the year 1731, he was robbed, seized, and sold to slavery. He was brought to America and purchased by a Maryland planter. About a year after he found means to convey a letter to England, written by himself, in Arabic. The letter fell into the hands of Mr. Oglethorpe. It was translated at Oxford; and, such was the esteem, which it procured for the writer, that Mr. Oglethorpe immediately took measures to redeem him and bring him to England.

He tarried in England upwards of a year, discovered great mildness of temper and strength of intellect, and received much notice and liberal presents from many of the nobility and the royal family.

Having then an opportunity, he with great eagerness embraced it, to return to his native country. Alas! his father was no more; his wife had married another; his whole country had been ravaged by war—and, though before abounding in herds of cattle, had not a cow left. His wife's new husband however, hearing of his return, thought proper to abscond.

The generous man was deeply penetrated at his father's death and the misfortunes of his country; but his wife he forgave: For, said he, Mr. Moore, she could not help thinking I was dead, for I was gone to a land, from whence no Pholey ever yet returned. Therefore she is not to be blamed.

The story might doubtless be so told, that a tear would be no unnatural effect.

der the lash of debauched *drivers*, and leave the same miserable legacy entailed upon their miserable offspring.

Miserable indeed ! And yet, they have no fellow-sufferer to expostulate, like O'Brien at Algiers. They have no friends to redeem them. In general they can neither read nor write, and have, therefore, no way to fill the world with complaints. Their sufferings are their own, and they must bear them in silence. Despised, trodden down, and trampled upon, they have lost all manhood, and find relief only in their stupidity, the effect of cruelty and despair.

This is a real likeness ; not drawn by the pencil of phrensy. And any who doubts it may satisfy himself by reading or travel, that the half is not told him.

But what if their grievances were less, and the treatment they receive more humane, than the most favourable representations pretend ; still they are *slaves*, and ought to be set at liberty with all possible dispatch. Why do we not drain this fountain of idleness, luxury, and licentiousness ? Why do we not silence the domineering tone of masters ? At the same time, we shall increase the number of freemen, the bonds of society, the quantity of productive labour, the aggregate of human happiness.

When will Americans show, that they are, what they affect to be thought, friends to the cause of humanity at large, reverers of the rights of their fellow-creatures. Hitherto we have been oppressors ; nay—murderers ! For many a negro has died by the whip of his master ; and many have lived when death would have been preferable. Surely, the curse of GOD, and the reproach of man, is against us. More than the seven plagues of Egypt will befall us. If Algiers shall be punished seven fold, truly America seventy and seven fold.

This is severe ; but where is the conscience that does not acknowledge it just ? Do we feel indignation when perusing the history of tyranny ; does resentment kindle at the least abridgement of our rights ; do we denounce death to the corsair ;—the replication may be most poignantly given—*Thou art the man,*

Thou

Thou art that marble-heart, that lordling, that pirate
—the object of thy own curses.

Much has been said; volumes are on the shelves, upon the origin of nations and their difference of colour. Curious, but of little service; the philosopher's pastime. To rescue a person from sufferings is an act of more merit, than to trace back his pedigree to the first progenitor. Nay; I would rather give happiness to an individual, than speculate upon the genealogy of nations with univalled success, or be the inventor of the most unexceptionable hypotheses respecting the diversity of human complexions and features. But I must not prolong the discourse.

Let us thoroughly contemplate the subject, and act the consistent and the beneficent part. Like the royal convict whose name is in the text, let us acknowledge our guilt; and, like people of the most noble sentiments, let us immediately change our system of conduct. We ought to sign a protest against slavery; and publicly to declare our abhorrence of this national iniquity and abomination. In short, we ought to do every thing in our power, to bring about a constitutional reform; that there may be a universal abolition through the states—I might have said, through all nations. In particular, we ought religiously to refrain from voting for any man to sustain a public office of any kind, whatever may be his abilities, if he is known to be the owner of a slave. This should debar him from every place of trust and honour in the commonwealth. Above all, we ought to implore the PARENT of mankind, to diffuse every where a spirit of christian charity; that oppression may cease through the world, and kindness and gentleness mark all the dealings of man with his fellow-pilgrims, till all are brought into ONE FAMILY.



ERROURS in TYPOGRAPHY.

- * * The word NEGRO, wherever it occurs, ought to begin with a capital; but it would not comport with their state of degradation, which levels them with cattle.